

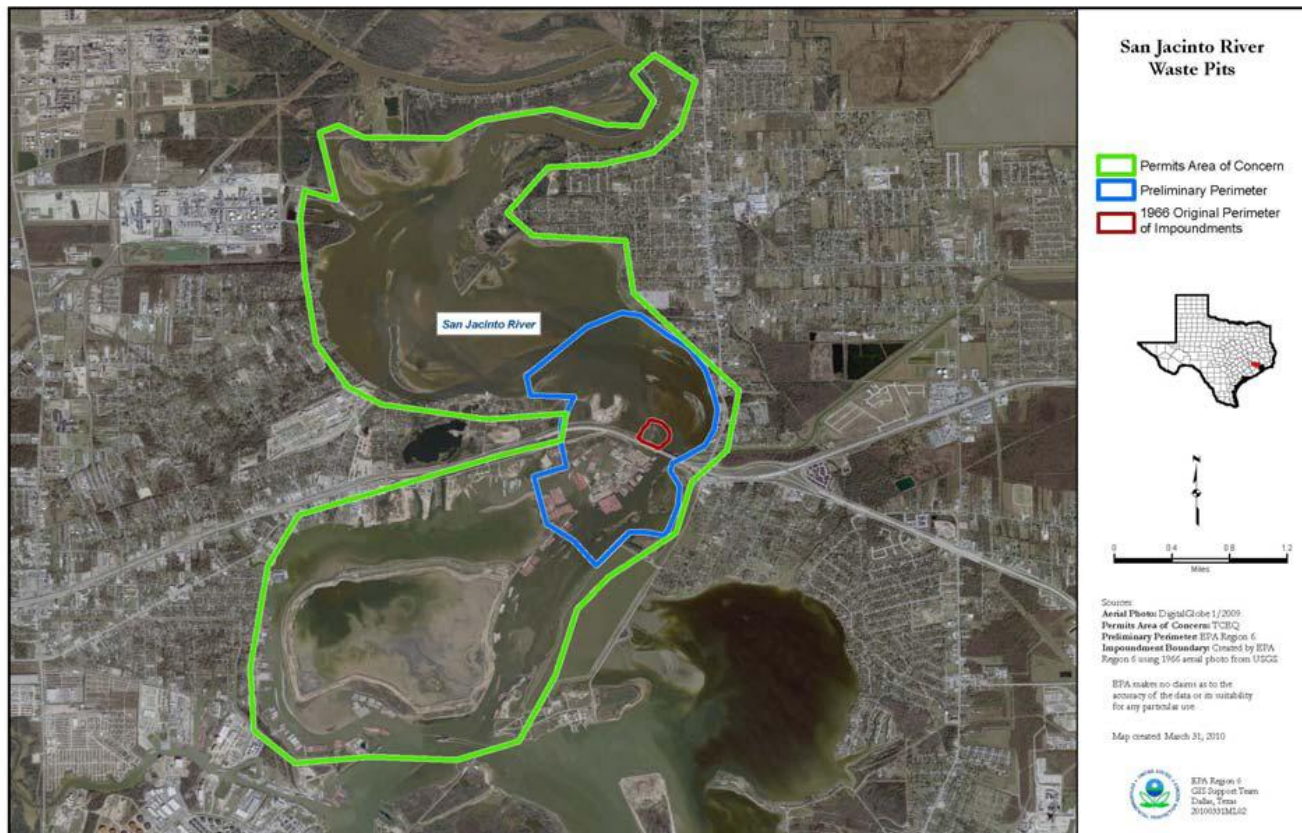
San Jacinto River Waste Pits, Texas

Site Update – October 2011

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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BACKGROUND:

The site consists of impoundments located adjacent to the Interstate Highway 10 (I-10) Bridge and the San Jacinto River and the surrounding areas, containing paper mill waste from the Pasadena Champion Paper Mill. Two impoundments are located north of the I-10 Bridge and are partially submerged in the San Jacinto River on the western side in Harris County, Texas. An additional impoundment is suspected to be located directly south of the I-10 Bridge and is currently being investigated under the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study.

The primary hazardous substances documented at the site are dioxins (polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans). Dioxin concentrations as high as 360,000 parts per trillion have been found in sediment samples collected from the submerged portion of the waste disposal ponds, as well as dioxin concentrations as high as 3,660 parts per trillion in sediment samples collected outside the original 1966 waste ponds. A fish consumption advisory based on dioxin is in place on this segment of the watershed.

The site was listed on the EPA National Priorities List on March 19, 2008. The EPA SJRWP website can be found online at: http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/san_jacinto.

STATUS OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES:

I. Community Outreach

EPA, State, county and local agencies and industry held a Community Awareness Committee meeting on Nov.16, 2011, to update site progress including the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS), Removal, and Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) activities. EPA staff also updated the stakeholder group on the use of color-coding to more clearly communicate the levels of risks to residents near the site. There will be no Community Awareness Committee meeting in December.

II. Source Stabilization

On Nov. 22, the EPA received the first revision of the Draft Final Construction Completion Report from the Responsible Parties. The draft document has been sent to stakeholders from the Port of Houston Authority, Harris County, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for review and input. Comments on the draft document are due to the EPA by Dec. 9, 2011.

III. Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS)

The field sampling plans for the Fate & Transport Model Study, including the collection of upstream sediment load and current velocity data, have been suspended due to lack of flow in the San Jacinto River. Sampling in the river will be resumed if high-flow conditions are seen within the next several months. Two Internet-based presentations/discussions were held in November with participating agencies and the potentially responsible party (PRP) group regarding the Fate and Transport modeling effort and environmental monitoring for the waste pit cap effectiveness. The draft Fate and Transport Model Study Report is expected to be submitted in February 2012 for review. Agency review of the proposed cap monitoring approach is in progress and a response to the PRPs is expected this month. The results of the recently completed sediment and tissue sampling events upstream and downstream of the site are expected this month and will be incorporated into the Remedial Investigation Report. Plans for the additional sampling in the Southern Impoundment are expected to be finalized in December.

IV. Watershed Management

EPA continues to coordinate with the Port of Houston Authority, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District and the TCEQ. TCEQ envisions completing the total maximum daily load for Buffalo Bayou with regard to dioxin/furan by the end of 2012 and will put together a monitoring and implementation plan to reduce levels in Buffalo Bayou to within national background levels.

V. Enforcement

The potentially responsible party (PRP) group continues to conduct the RI/FS under the Unilateral Administrative Order. Respondents continue to work towards resolving the outstanding issue of stipulated penalties resulting from prior noncompliance with the AOC.